



FIVE STRINGER AMERICAN BANJO FRATERNITY

NUMBER 218

MARCH 2020

LATE WINTER

HORACE WESTON'S MINOR JIG

“Weston’s Minor Jig” is one of those haunting pieces that is timeless. It was very popular during the last three decades of the 19th century. Frequent mentions in periodicals indicate that it was performed often, even by full banjo orchestras.

The “Jig” became an ABF favorite after S. S. Stewart’s wonderful arrangement, transposed for the first time in C notation, was published in 5-Stringer issue 104 (write your editors if you need a copy).

We are pleased to now present the story of how Weston composed this piece, taken from the original publications. Weston sustained a lifetime of physical pain from injuries he received while serving with the US Navy during the American Civil War. As the story goes, he was bedridden with suffering when inspiration “visited” him.

In this issue we offer four different arrangements of “Weston’s Minor Jig.” The earliest is from George C. Dobson’s New School for the Banjo, of 1877. It is simply titled “Minor Jig” and is uncredited. George Dobson was connected to Weston in that he took

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Mark Your Calendar!

THE ABF SPRING RALLY

May 28, 29, 30, 2020

Newark Garden Hotel

125 N. Main St, Newark, NY

(near Rochester, NY)

Call (315) 331-9500 for reservations.

Theme “Play Your Favorites”

FALL 2019 RALLY RECAP

We had a great fall rally with a solid turnout and excellent classic banjo playing. Members started arriving early on Wednesday and things were in full swing by Thursday.

Friday morning Drew Frech, Becky Schneider and Gail Verbridge got things rolling with a look at the banjo pieces published by Orpheus Publications. They were assisted with percussion effects by Ruth Vitale and your editor.

After a break for lunch we came back for the Round Robin, and it was a great one. First timer Trevor Holder (all the way from Georgia) blew us away with his blazing contributions. There was great playing all around.

Following a short break we had the ABF Orchestra rehearsal, and after dinner we tried something new. Drew and Becky had dipped into their collections and the ABF library to pull out a number of “A grade” solos by Herbert J. Ellis that included 1st and 2nd banjo with piano for each number. Everyone assembled (armed with banjos) in the ballroom for a “Picking & Sipping” session. We provided each participant with a packet of music, and assigned 1st & 2nd parts for people to play. When we all were ready, we started sight reading the pieces.

This workshop taught some great lessons. The main goal was to get people playing together. Before we started to play a piece we would mark it up, noting the reading order, position playing, and any parts that might need attention to go smoothly. After the marking we would play the piece—for the first time.

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THE FIVE-STRINGER

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Treasurer Position Available

The ABF needs your help. We are looking for a new Treasurer. The duties include: managing the ABF budget; keeping track of members and maintaining the members list; collecting dues; mailing out reminders/membership cards; and presenting the budget report at the annual business meeting. This position is best held by an active member who attends at least one rally per year. Please contact the editors for more information.

NEW MEMBERS

Barbara Duer, 10009 Hefner Village Terrace
 Oklahoma City, OK 73162

Trevor Holder, 19 Dimple Lane
 Ringgold, GA 30736

Zeke Smukler, 226 Kensington Pl.
 Syracuse, NY 13210

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

John Cowles, 401 Shiloh Rd., apt. 1204
 Plano, TX 75074

Janet Davis, 10 Bacton Lane,
 Bella Vista, AR 72714

Fred Miller, c/o F. Miller III, 48 E. Stephen Dr.
 Newark, DE 19713-1862

Rowan Nelson-Ferris, 3400 East 17th Ave. #200
 Denver, CO 80206

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 Buffalo, NY 14214-1947

Marc Smith, 4524 Lake Circle Dr.
 Little River, SC 29566

Margaret Schreyer, 301 S. 5th St., apt. 321
 Mankato, MN 56001

*****NOTICE*****

Postage and printing costs keep going up!

We are having to raise dues to keep up.

We will now have two options:

\$20US for Two Years Membership and Digital Copies of the 5-Stringer.

\$30US for Two Years Membership and a Paper Copy of the 5-Stringer.

Both Options Include ALL Member Benefits, Including:

**Access to the Library of Sheet Music
 Free Digital Back Issues of the 5 Stringer**

FALL RALLY LINEUP



Left to right, back row: Grace Van't Hof, John Cohen, Doug Kiessling, Paul Draper, and Stephen Brodine.

Middle row: John Flanagan, Hugh Howes, Ruth Vitale, Frank Vitale, Elias Kaufman, and Aaron Jonah Lewis.

Bottom row: Edwin Sparkes, Angelia Sparkes, Becky Schneider, Drew Frech, Joel Hooks, Madeleine Kaufman, and Gail Verbridge.



Aaron Jonah Lewis



Drew Frech



Friday Evening "Picking & Sipping"



HORACE WESTON.

Woodcut published in S. S. Stewart Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 6, No. 6, Feb. & March 1890. Eastman School of Music Digital Collection.

HISTORY OF WESTON'S MINOR JIG.

It is related of Horace Weston that whilst confined to his bed with rheumatism, Satan appeared to him, and told him that if he would lend him a Banjo he would show him a thing or two about playing. Weston told him to look under the bed and he would there find an instrument. His Satanic Majesty, as directed, drew from under the bed a Banjo, and began tuning it in the most weird and grotesque manner. Greatly to Weston's surprise he began playing the most beautiful harmony and chords, and after finding his way into a minor key, played a jig, so surprisingly and exquisitely beautiful that, for a time, it deprived his hearer of the power of breathing, and he fell into a deep swoon. Upon awaking, he found himself alone, and his Banjo in its accustomed place. Springing out of bed, much to his surprise, he found that all pain had left him. He seized his instrument and endeavored to express upon it what he had heard. The composition thus produced is known as his celebrated Minor Jig, and although much inferior to the original inspiration, it has in its construction something so weird and unearthly, that once when he was playing in a room under which was the office of a noted physician, the doctor declared that it appeared to him as though the Banjo was crying, and tears dropping out of the window.

Reprinted from Sketches of Noted Banjo Players by S. S. Stewart, 1881. Thanks to Greg Adams for the image.

Weston's Dream.

BY CHAS. S. PATTY.

As Weston the famous once lay on his bed,
Whilst clean from his feet to the top of his head
The rheumatic pains with their terrible thrill,
Still crept through his frame like an ague chill ;
His Stanic Majesty came to his room
To talk, as he said, of the great "banjo boom."
Satan at last has grown tired of the fiddle,
Where its players all go is I think no hard riddle.

Be seated, said Weston. How are they in—well ?
Quite well, Satan said ; but, friend Weston, pray
tell
Where your banjo is hid, for I think I can ease
you

By playing a piece I imagine will please you.
The banjo was found—with a frightful grimace
"Old Sooty" soon fitted the bridge to its place,
And regardless of hints about cutting his nails,
In drum chords he handled his fingers like flails.

To a weird minor strain he next glided with ease,
After touching the chords in the various keys,
And its mystical tones to the great artist's ears
Seemed so like to the fall of some lost angel's
tears,

That he rose in his sick-bed, enthralled by the
tune,
But, o'ercome by the music, fell back in a swoon.
When reason returned he was lying alone,
The light burning low, and his visitor gone.

But still the strange melody haunted his brain,
Till he rose, glad to find he was free from all
pain.

Quickly seizing his banjo, again and again
He sought for that magical minor strain,
Till he found it at last. By the artist 'twas named
Weston's Great Minor Jig, for its beauty far
famed.

So this brings me at last to the end of my theme,
The story of Weston's most wonderful dream.

Reprinted from the S. S. Stewart Banjo & Guitar Journal, Vol. 1, No. 11, March 1883. Thanks to Jim Bollman for providing the original copy.

HORACE WESTON'S JIG.

5×Bar.

3×Bar.

4×Bar.

7×Bar. 5×Bar.

1 Bar.

1×Bar. 3×Bar.

D.C.al Fine.

MINOR JIG.

Composed by H. C. DOBSON.

4th Position.



4th Pos.

*FINE.*

5th Pos.



MINOR JIG. Concluded.

D.C.

Originally published in Dobson's Universal Banjo Instructor, 1882, by Henry & George Dobson.

George C. Dobson's

Minor Jig.

FINE.

5th Pos.

D.C.

Originally published in George C. Dobson's New School For The Banjo, 1877.

WESTON'S GREAT MINOR JIG.

HORACE WESTON.

Banjo and Guitar Journal.

Copyright, 1883, by S. S. STEWART.

Weston, Cont'd.

lessons from him in “stroke style,” with a thimble. Weston competed in at least one of the Dobson family banjo contests and appeared in others as a special act. The banjo world of New York City was small during the 1870s, and many professional banjoists knew each other.

The next arrangement comes from The Artistic Banjoist published by S. S. Stewart in 1879, rightfully credited to the composer.

After that, once again we find “Weston’s Minor Jig” in a Dobson publication, Dobson’s Universal Banjo Instructor of 1882. This time it is claimed as being composed by Henry C. Dobson. This is no surprise, as Henry had a history of being less than honest. This arrangement has more to it than the others—including an elaborate introduction and bridge.

Finally, we have another Stewart-published arrangement. This first appeared in the Stewart Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1883 and was later published in a folio, S. S. Stewart’s Banjo & Guitar Music Album, which was offered as a premium for new subscribers of The Journal.

There is something great about each of these versions. It can also be fun to mix and match parts to create new arrangements.

All of the pieces as shown here were transposed using the “whiteout” method in order to retain the look and font of the original printed scores.



Edwin Sparkes



Trevor Holder

Rally Recap, Cont'd.

It turned out to be great fun! A positive experience was had by all (and spectators said we sounded pretty good, too).

Soon jamming commenced, and we all stayed up way too late.

Aaron Jonah Lewis started us off on Saturday morning with a special presentation. He discussed his process of learning pieces and practicing, and played through several numbers. His playing was outstanding and his topics of discussion had everyone’s attention.

As Aaron finished up, Wayne Smith & Bill Rowe arrived with a number of classic and antique cars for us to ride in to lunch. Once back, we set up for the Round Robin with more fine playing and sharing of music.

Dinner was followed by the second part of the reading workshop “Picking & Sipping,” and once again it was a lot of fun!

CLASSIC BANJO RECORDINGS

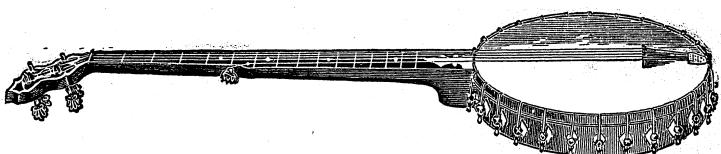
Attendees of the last two rallies were able to get an advanced taste for Aaron Jonah Lewis' new project, Mozart of The Banjo, The Joe Morley Project (CD with booklet). This work does not disappoint. In addition to the choice selection of Morley compositions, Lewis has added exercises from Morley's tutor. While originally intended for practice, the exercises are quite listenable, and the playing is overall excellent. We recommend it. It is available in physical form and in digital format from all the usual places, or directly from aaronjonahlewis.com. Your editor's own favorite is "Mauna Loa", on which Lewis does a wonderful job of bringing out the Hawaiian guitar effect.

Anyone interested in classic banjo is no stranger to Chris Sands. Chris has been a staple of the community for several decades, having studied under Tarrant Bailey Jr., and himself continuing the direct tradition of classic banjo.

Chris' latest project, Banjo Time Machine, was four years in the making. Chris Sands and Keith Nichols take us on a full-immersion trip back to the experiences of the earliest recording artists. The album was recorded entirely on wax cylinders.

As expected, the playing of Sands' banjo along with Nichols' artistic piano renderings is skillful and very enjoyable. The liner notes give us an idea of the challenges faced in this project, while the musical selections are a nice mix of banjo standards, Sands' compositions, and piano solos, with a bit of song added for variety.

The album is fascinating as a study of just how accurate a representation of true banjo tone the early recordings are; it's easy to compare the sound of these new cylinders to Sands' other recordings and videos. Get your copy of Banjo Time Machine from Elderly Instruments and prepare for an enjoyable adventure.



A topic of discussion that comes up often with classic banjo players is the transition of popular banjo to country music. In Protobilly, the new box set by Henry Sapoznik, that question is explored in elaborate detail. Sapoznik puts no slant on the material, but presents side-by-side examples of popular music. The recordings speak for themselves. For the full experience one should read along from the set's 74-page illustrated book, in which Sapoznik gives carefully researched background on each track. While this is not specifically a classic banjo collection, it does deal with material from the "classic" era, and includes recordings by Harry C. Browne. The comprehensive set is available from the normal sources, or from henrysapoznik.com.

While we would not typically review old time recordings in a newsletter devoted to classic banjo, an exception is made for the long time friend and supporter of the ABF, Stephen Wade. Wade has released his new work A Storyteller's Story forty years after the premiere of his award-winning show "Banjo Dancing." While you won't find any classic banjo playing, this is a splendid old time banjo album full of stories and songs. Included is a 44-page illustrated book, all available in physical format and digital download from pxrec.com or the other usual places.

FALL CONCERT SERIES

Friday October 4, 2019
Drew Frech, Becky Schneider, & Gail Verbridge

Grand Avenue March, *Burnand*
Maud Schottische, *Burton*
Light Foot March, *Cammeyer*
Florine Gavotte, *Burton*
Knight's Grand March, *Murphy*
Road to Moscow, arr. *Grossmith*

Saturday October 5, 2019
Aaron Jonah Lewis

Nuts & Wine, *Morley*
Banjotown, *Morley*
Banjo Frolic, *Morley*
Banjo Land, *Morley*



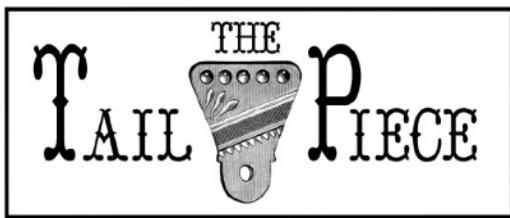
Clockwise starting top left, Eli Kaufman, Grace Van't Hof, Aaron Jonah Lewis, Paul Draper, Trevor Holder, Joel Hooks, and Doug Kiessling.

Round Robin Friday Oct. 4, 2019

Ruth & Frank Vitale—"Wedding Bells Rag," *Dean*
 Paul Draper—"Melon Jig," *Ellis*, & "Railroad Polka,"
Buckley
 Joel Hooks—"Dance of the Witches," *Ellis* &
 "L'Infanta March," *Gregory*
 Trevor Holder—"Cupid's Arrow," *Eno* & "Darktown
 Dandies," *Morley*
 Doug Kiessling—"Alabama Hoedown," *Armstrong*
 Edwin Sparkes—"La Marguerite Waltz," *Monk*, &
 "The Dusky Dandy," *Grimshaw*
 Drew Frech, Becky Schneider, Gail Verbridge
 —"Monomoy," *Bradbury*, & "Galop De Concert," arr.
Nassau-Kennedy

Round Robin Saturday Oct. 5, 2019

Drew Frech—"Sanctimonious Eph," *Stuber*, & "Banjo
 in a Fit," *Glynn*
 Edwin Sparkes—"The Banshee," & "Lancashire
 Clogs," *Grimshaw*
 Doug Kiessling—"Banjo Polka," *Geo. Dobson*
 Trevor Holder—"L'Infanta March," *Gregory*, &
 "Whipped Cream Rag," *Wenrich*
 Joel Hooks—"Reverie," *Hind*, & "Gypsy Rondo,"
Haydn
 Paul Draper—"At a Georgia Camp Meeting," *Mills*
 Aaron Jonah Lewis—"Chopin Opus 28 No. 20 in C
 minor," *Chopin* & "Tell Me Pretty Maiden," *Leslie
 Stewart*
 Ruth & Frank Vitale—"How Great Thou Art," *Boberg*
 & "Wedding Bells Rag," *Dean*



*** Please send your current e-mail address to our treasurer Madeleine Kaufman. We promise we won't spam you! ***

Michael Nix has been busy with his Classic Banjo Project, created to commission and develop new compositions for 7-string (6+1) and regular classic banjo. Nix will be recording and performing these new pieces in concert. Current contributors include **Jim Dalton** and **Thomas Schuttenhelm**. For more information on the project and Nix's current concert schedule, check out michaelnixmusic.com.

The new **Clifford Essex Music Co., LTD.** continues to publish high quality content in the **B.M.G Magazine**, edited by **David Cotton**. Each issue includes items and music for the classic banjoist. For more information check out cliffordessex.net.

Your editors managed to catch **Jerron Paxton** in concert at the Bull Run Tavern on November 16th in Shirley, MA. Paxton included a graceful rendition of "Nola" on classic banjo in his show.

It was just announced that the **Early Banjo Gathering** has been revived and will be taking place June 26-28, 2020 at the Renfrew Museum and Park in Waynesboro, PA. The Early Banjo Gathering focuses on "early" or "minstrel"-era stroke style, as well as fingerstyle banjo playing. There is much overlap with classic banjo, and this event covers the earliest proto-banjos up to the post- American Civil War period. Attendance is limited; contact (717) 762-4723 info@renfrewmuseum.org for more details.

WANTED: Your editors are trying to locate a copy of **The Standard Method for Banjo, Thimble and Plectrum Styles Combined** by Tom Cary, published in 1927. A copy/digital copy would be sufficient, or a short loan.

Dow Douthitt is looking for a Van Eps banjo. Will consider "hole in the head" or Farmer tone-ring banjos. Contact reddouthitt@yahoo.com .

L. BETTENCOURT'S THUNDERING JIG.

- on Bass -

HORACE WESTON.

Ist * Bar. 3 * Bar. Roll. D.C.